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How This Book Happened

On; an October day in 1991, more specifically a Saturday morning, Gail Lembo happened upon the nineteenth century diaries of George M. Wadsworth.

In the front of the Old Newell House at 200 Grove Street, Gail saw a yard sale in progress. She stopped. She bought three "Pocket Diaries," And within hours she realized she had unearthed a rare account of the lives of the Wadsworth family -- George, Emeline, Joseph, Abbie, Seth, and the others -- and of their South Franklin friends and neighbors.

Tantalized, energized, and beguiled, Gail went back to the yard sale, found the remaining fifteen Wadsworth volumes, and bought them. About a year later, the late David Brown, a Wrentham teacher and historian, gave Gail seven additional diaries.

For the past six and a half years now, she has transcribed or edited more than 9,000 daily entries, gathered maps, deeds, and photos, and put the entire package together to produce this book. Some might ask why, having expended hundreds of'hours researching, interviewing, and transcribing, Gail would donate the diaries to the people of Franklin through the Franklin Public Library. Few would be so magnanimous.
Simply put, in Gail's opinion the diaries should belong to all the residents of the town and not to any one person. She also believes the diaries form an archway of knowledge to those countless travails and rare comforts in the lives of those 19th century South Franklinites.

For more than twenty years I have known Gail as a person of mettle and enthusiasm, Now a spark of that enthusiasm, kindled by the sotting out of George Wadsworth's historical notes, has illuminated nearly a half-century of Franklin's past. The luminosity of this work places her in what the Pulitzer Prize winner William Kennedy calls, "the hierarchy of shining energetics." And so, Gail, on behalf of your fellow Franklinites, thank you for the diaries, thank you for the light.

Paul M. De Baggis
30 March 1998

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